

Application No. 09/689,279
Amendment dated March 25, 2004
Reply to Office Action of January 6, 2004

REMARKS

Continued examination and reconsideration of the present application are respectfully requested.

Claims 7-9, 17-19, and 77-87 are pending, and are in condition for allowance for at least the reasons set forth below.

Support for the foregoing claim amendments can be found throughout the original specification, for example, at page 17, line 22, to page 19, line 18, and in Figs. 3 and 6. Entry and consideration of the amendments are respectfully requested.

Applicants gratefully acknowledge the indication in the Office Action that claims 7-8, 17-19, and 86-87 are allowed.

The Office Action indicates that claims 77-85 are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. The foregoing amendments to claims 77, 80, and 83 address the Examiner's objection and rewrite the claims as suggested by the Examiner. Entry and consideration of the amendments and allowance of claims 77-85 are respectfully requested.

The Examiner has rejected claims 42-44 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over any of Baird et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,470,472), Mattelmaki (U.S. Patent No. 5,149,448), Martensson et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,968,372) or French Patent No. 1,165,054.

Although Applicants disagree with the rejection, to further prosecution at this time claims 42-44 have been cancelled by the above amendment, without prejudice or disclaimer to the subject matter claimed therein. Accordingly, the rejection of claims 42-44 are moot in view of their cancellation.

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Withdrawal of the objections and rejections in light of the foregoing is respectfully requested and in order. Allowance of the pending claims is earnestly solicited.

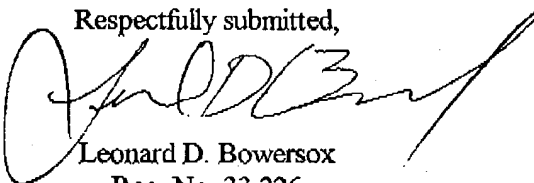
CONCLUSION

Applicants respectfully request favorable reconsideration of the present application and a timely allowance of the pending claims.

Should the Examiner deem that any further action by Applicants or Applicants' undersigned representative is desirable and/or necessary, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at the number set forth below.

Should any fees be necessary in connection with this filing, the Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge such fees to deposit Account No. 50-0925. Should an extension of time be due, the Commissioner is requested to hereby consider this a Petition and charge the appropriate extension of time fee to said Deposit Account.

Respectfully submitted,



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